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Stewart, Charles James, bp., 1775-1837

A short view of the present state of  
Eastern Townships in the province of Lo  
Canada. Montreal. n.d.



**SHORT VIEW**  
**OF THE**  
**PRESENT STATE OF THE**  
**EASTERN TOWNSHIPS**

**IN THE**  
**Province of Lower Canada,**

**BORDERING ON THE LINE 45°:**

**WITH**  
***HINTS FOR THEIR IMPROVEMENT.***

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**BY THE**  
**HON. AND REV. CHARLES STEWART, D.D.**  
**MINISTER OF ST. ARMAND, LOWER CANADA, AND CHAPLAIN**  
**TO THE LORD BISHOP OF QUEBEC.**

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“ It is the sinfulness of blood in the world to forsake or destitute a  
“ plantation once in forwardness; for, besides the dishonour, it is  
“ the guiltiness of blood of many commiserable persons.”

**BACON.**

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## SHORT VIEW,

&c.

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**E**ASTERN Townships is a general name frequently given to all the Townships extending East from the River Richelieu to the eastern boundary of the Province, which divides it from the States of New-Hampshire and Massachusetts, of which last State Maine forms a part. They are bounded on the South by the Provincial Boundary Line, the 45th degree of North latitude. To the northward their extension does not admit of particular description, as they are usually understood to comprise the Townships which have been settled within these last thirty years, lying in the southern part of the districts of Quebec, Three Rivers, and Montreal.

The climate of these Townships is more mild than that of any part of the Province North of the River St. Lawrence; and the soil is, in general, very good and easy of cultivation.

There are not many very high lands or mountains in these Townships. Near the line 45° the country is, for the most part, rather more hilly than further northward, and better watered with lakes, rivers, and living springs; but in these Townships, in general, there are many fine streams of water, which afford excellent sites for grist-mills, saw-mills, &c.

Like the rest of the Province, all this part of the country is a forest, except where it has been cleared by the industry of man. In the woods, rivers, and swamps, there are bears, wolves, and foxes; otters, beavers, martins, and muskrats; some wild cats, some deer, and moose; hares, and squirrels of various sorts. There are also wild ducks, and partridges\*, and other animals of the feathered race. But birds do not abound; and game, and furred animals are not plentiful. The bears sometimes do considerable mischief in the corn-fields, when the maize is young; and the wolves, in winter, frequently destroy many sheep.

Lake Memphramagog, and the other lakes, afford several kinds of fish, especially salmon-trout. Salmon, masquinonge, and cat-fish, are caught in the rivers; and at the breaking up of the ice in spring, in Missiskoui-Bay, great

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\* The partridge is a species of the grouse, according to Dr. Morse; who says, neither the pheasant, partridge, nor quail, are to be found in America.

quantities of fish are taken in the mouth of Pike River, *viz.* poison-doré, masquinonge, mullet, pike, perch, and suckers. Sturgeon, also, are found in most of the rivers; and tortoises are not unfrequent in the lakes and rivers.

The forest produces the same variety of trees as is common to the rest of the Province, and a great deal of excellent timber. But, for the most part, the inhabitants of these Townships are too far removed from the navigation of the Rivers Richelieu and St. Lawrence to admit of their benefiting by the lumber trade. Pine and oak, however, are less plentiful than the other sorts of timber. The sap of the maple tree affords a sufficient supply of good sugar and molasses for the use of most families.

All kinds of grain are cultivated, and produce good crops. Indian corn grows very well near the Province Line, and on the warmer soils. In some seasons it is very much injured by frosts and rainy weather; yet the farmers are partial to it, as it is very nutritive for man and beast. Wheat is cultivated with success in all the Townships, but especially in St. Armand, near Missiskoui-Bay. The soil there is generally considered as being more suited to raising wheat than to being kept in pasture; while to the eastward it is thought to be particularly favourable to grazing. The farmers, in general, are not sufficiently careful and neat in their system of agriculture. This is in some measure difficult to be avoided; and the quan-

tity of new or uncleared land, always at hand, inviting cultivation, presents greater advantages to be derived from its fresh tillage than can be reaped from the dressing of old land more perfectly. Also, the high price of labour, and the great length and severity of the winter, curtail the time and power of the farmer in respect of prosecuting a finished style of agriculture. But the farmers are, for the most part, too much disposed to clear fresh lands, to the neglect of what has been already cleared.

In some of the Townships large quantities of potatoes are raised, from which a pretty good whisky is distilled. In St. Armand there are several fine orchards of apple-trees; and young apple-trees are planted on most of the farms in these Townships. Cider is made in St. Armand, Stanbridge, and Caldwell and Christie Manors; and it is to be hoped that in the course of a few years it will be the common beverage in all this part of the country. Some hemp has been raised; but agriculture is not sufficiently advanced on most farms to make the culture of it, at present, a desirable object; especially, while the population is so small, and the price of labour so high, as they unavoidably are in a newly settled country. The future culture of it, however, ought to be looked forward to as an object of national importance, as well as of individual benefit; for unquestionably, this country, at no distant period, may supply Great Britain with a very great proportion of the hemp required by her for the equipment of her navy, &c. to the advantage of the colonists,



and of the government at home ; if hereafter due encouragement be given to the raising of this valuable plant. Considerable quantities of potash are made in these Townships. The sale of it is a convenient and profitable help to settlers on their first beginning to clear a farm ; but, when it fetches a great price they are apt to devote themselves too much to the manufacture of it, to the neglect and detriment of their farms ; which was the case in the years 1809, 1810, and 1811. In Sutton, Brome, and Potton, and other parts of the country, bog and mountain iron ore are found ; and it is probable that mines of various kinds of ore would be discovered in several of these Townships, were they properly explored. Black lead ore has been found in Newport and Eaton. In Sutton there is an iron forge.

The granted lands in this part of the Province are all held in free and common soccage, except in St. Armand, Caldwell and Christie Manors\*, Sabrevois, and Bleuri, all which are old French Seigniories. The price of land in the Townships for the purchase of an acre in fee-simple may be reckoned from two dollars to ten dollars, in buying a parcel of land, with some improvements on it, of one hundred acres, or from that magnitude to three or four hundred acres. But, on this subject it is not possible to say any thing with precision, especially in the present time of war ; and it is to be

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\* Caldwell Manor and Christie Manor were formerly called Foucault and Noyan.

expected that the value of land in these Townships will rise rapidly after a peace takes place, and when the improvements are made in this part of the country which will probably soon follow that desirable event. These ought to be attended to and promoted; and they are mentioned in the sequel\*.

The population of the several Townships is very unequal. The cultivation of each of them is respectively in proportion to its population; for, with few exceptions, all the people in every one of them are chiefly employed in agriculture. The whole population may be reckoned at about 20,000 souls. Of this number St. Armand and Stanstead contain a fourth part. The inhabitants are almost entirely settlers from the United States; at least, the heads of families are generally of this description. In St. Armand, and Caldwell and Christie Manors, especially, many of these are loyalists who came into the Province during the revolutionary war and since that period. These are for the most part of German extraction; and formerly they belonged to the State of New York. They and their families are good and loyal subjects. The rest of the inhabitants, in general, are descended from parents who formerly belonged to the New-England States; and during the present war they have,

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\* When this Pamphlet was originally printed at Montreal (in February 1815), the ratification of the last treaty of peace with the United States had not taken place.

for the most part, shown themselves ready to defend their country and property with due fidelity.

Some persons have entertained an opinion that it would have tended to the security of the Province not to have suffered the Frontier Townships to have been settled, but that it would have been advisable to have kept them in a state of nature, that they might serve as a barrier between the Province and the United States. And some have been averse to their being settled by people from the United States, considering settlers from that country as dangerous subjects. Neither of these questions need now to be discussed. They are overruled by existing circumstances; and they are answered in some measure by late events, as the settlement of them has not proved detrimental but beneficial to us in the present war. Now that they are settled and flourishing, their improvement, and the increase of their population and agricultural produce, are evidently objects worthy of the attention of His Majesty's Government. It would be conducive to the improvement of this district if colonists from Great Britain and Ireland would come to them; but it is to be presumed that they must and will be settled chiefly by persons emigrating from the United States. This ought not to be checked. In many respects they make the best settlers in a new country; and the most certain way of making them, and all men, good subjects, is, taking care to promote the welfare and prosperity of the country

they live in. This is chiefly to be done by making laws and regulations calculated to maintain industry, morality, and religion among the inhabitants. Whatever tends to the accomplishment of this desirable object adds to the happiness of the people; and this is the best way of uniting the government and the people in ties of mutual interest and affection.

It is to be hoped that at the conclusion of the war the grants of land by His Majesty's Government to discharged soldiers will supply this country with many good settlers. At the same time, it is to be observed, that persons of this description do not, in general, make good farmers. To make these grants profitable to the grantees, and to the Government, it might perhaps be advisable to hold out encouragement to officers of regiments, of a suitable character, to take a lead in selecting men, and going forward with them to settle a portion of a Township, to be granted to them on certain conditions of settling it, carrying on improvements, and so forth. To induce the soldiers to settle on their lands, giving them the most necessary implements of husbandry, and allowing them rations for the first, second, and third years, would probably have a very good effect. The rations might be reduced one-third the second year, and two-thirds the next year\*. The ap-

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\* Since writing the above, the Author has had the satisfaction of reading a general order, notifying to the troops the Prince Regent's benevolent intention to grant them land, and to give them assistance of the description here mentioned.

pointment of a few intelligent farmers to superintend and direct their labours, for the first year or two, would be essential and necessary to their welfare in the beginning of their settlement. Inducement ought also to be held out to other farmers to join them in the settlement, by giving them lots interspersed in different parts of it; as the soldiers could not fail to profit by the skill, and example in husbandry, of experienced farmers living in their immediate neighbourhood.

One of the first measures and proofs of improvement in every country is the accommodation of the inhabitants in the making of roads. Every facility should be given to the procuring of these. The Road Act of the Province is very defective in several respects; and it is to be hoped that it will soon be amended. There is great difficulty in getting roads legally established, in consequence of the expense of it, the distance of the Grand Voyer from this part of the country, and the rules of court with respect to ratifying, &c. And when they are established, or ordered by law, there are several obstacles in the way of making them. Proprietors of uncultivated lands in the neighbourhood of them, more particularly if they reside in foreign countries, cannot, at present, be obliged to contribute to the work required to be done on them; and the crown and clergy reservation-lots, not yet leased, have hitherto been exempted from this duty. This evil ought to be remedied by making lands liable to be attached for the expense of making roads;



and this should be ordered in some proportion to the benefit they derive from them. Also, the work required of the inhabitants to be done on the road ought to be more equally proportioned to their respective convenience and interest in its contiguity to, or distance from their farms.

Communication between the different parts of a country essentially contributes to the convenience and interest of the inhabitants. Without this intercourse, progress in every kind of improvement is checked ; and even when improvements are made, the benefit of them is greatly counteracted by the want of ready conveyance and intercourse in the neighbourhood of them, and thence to the chief towns and markets of the Province. There is not any road established by law from any of these Townships, either to Montreal, Three Rivers, or Quebec, except one laid out by the Grand Voyer from Compton towards Three Rivers, (in or about A. D. 1809), and that one has not been worked upon. In the year 1810, Sir James Craig caused a road to be made from Quebec towards the Frontier Townships, proposing to extend it to the Province Line in Stanstead, but this road is imperfectly made, and that not further than the Township of Ship-ton. In 1807 and 1808, a road was established from the Province Line in Stanstead to the outlet of Lake Memphramagog, and thence to the Easterly Boundary Line of the Township of Granby. It was designed for a road to Montreal ; but the Grand Voyer could not continue

it through Granby, as that Township is not settled, though it was granted A. D. 1803. A company has been chartered for the purpose of making a road from the Province Line in the westerly part of St. Armand to Dorchester, *alias* St. John's; and they had commenced prosecuting this desirable work, when the war put a stop to their proceedings.

Another evil arising from the want of communication between the Townships and the chief places in the Province, is, that it increases the intercourse of the inhabitants with the United States, (whither the access is easy,) while it separates them from their own people and establishments in Quebec, Montreal, &c. It is palpable that a ready access to the markets of those places is necessary to the improvement and flourishing condition of the Townships.

It has been suggested that a Legislative Act, authorising the majority of the proprietors in a Parish or Township to levy a tax in the same, in lieu of the statute-labour required, wherever the majority shall prefer this mode of contribution, would have a good effect. Statute-labour is seldom duly exacted or applied, especially in these Townships.

The difficulty and great expense of legal prosecutions is another evil under which the inhabitants of the Townships labour, and which requires amendment. If intercourse with the places where the courts of law are held were

more easy, this burthen would be less felt. Still, the distance of the Frontier Townships from these places is so great, that it is much to be desired that they were erected into a district with a separate jurisdiction. If courts of law are necessary to the good order of society, no society ought to be far removed from them, longer than the evil can be remedied. The people of these Townships are far from being so destitute of good principles and good conduct as some persons who are not acquainted with them have been used to consider them ; yet, they would benefit by the restraints and checks and easier access to justice and legal awards and penalties, which would be introduced among them by the establishment of a Court of Jndicature in their neighbourhood. Not only their distance from the Courts of Montreal and Three Rivers, but also their situation bordering on the Province Line increases the expediency of this measure. Where escape from arrest, or prosecution, is rendered so easy by flight into a foreign land, and where fugitives from justice in a neighbouring country will seek a retreat, (evils inseparable from districts bordering on foreign states), it is particularly desirable that every obstacle in the way of legal measures, and the prompt execution of the laws, should as far as possible be removed. This can only be effected by the method here proposed. The want of such a legal establishment must be manifest when the distance of the Frontier Townships from Montreal and Three Rivers is considered. From Montreal to Barnston is about 120 miles, and



from Three Rivers to Hereford is about 150 miles, according to the routes now travelled. The consequence is, that suits for ten shillings and less, in the distant Townships, have cost as much as fourteen dollars, for the service of the summons, and the return of the same to the court of Montreal, or Three Rivers, independent of further proceedings. The adoption of the measure here recommended would embrace many advantages, and facilitate various improvements. One in particular ought to be mentioned. It is that of establishing a register-office, in which all deeds of sale, mortgage, &c. and, in general, all deeds and notarial acts relating to real estates, in order to render them valid, should be registered. The want of such an office and record, to give security to the purchase of real estates, is very much complained of in this country. It is so much wanted, that no title to land, except a sheriff's title, is in general deemed secure.

The people of these Townships can scarcely be said to be represented in the House of Assembly. The counties to which they belong are so large, and the places of election are, in general, so distant from them, that for the most part they do not take the pains of giving their votes in the election of a representative. Good roads, or the appointment of new places of election, more contiguous, and commodious to the parts lately settled, would in some degree remedy this evil; but the better way of removing it would be the formation of new counties.

Dividing the District into new counties would be followed by several beneficial results.

The difficulty of giving children any education in a newly settled country is a disadvantage to which it is incident, almost inseparable from its earliest stages of improvement, especially, when the settlers take up lots of one or two hundred acres, and each head of a family builds his habitation on his own lot ; which is the general practice of the settlers in these Townships. In many parts of them they are destitute of schools and school-masters. Now, that the population in most of them is considerable, this ought to be remedied. The inhabitants, no doubt, will in some measure soon provide for this want ; but its removal is worthy of the attention of Government and of public-spirited men. It is desirable that the first principles of religion, morality, and loyalty to the King, should be early instilled into the rising generation ; and this might be accomplished in a great degree by the appointment of proper school-masters. By allowing a small salary to two school-masters, or to three, in a Township, in addition to what the parents of the scholars should pay for their education, the nomination of the masters, and their system of education, might be watched over, and directed by government. A salary of £60 divided between two school-masters, would be more beneficial than the same sum, or more, given to one school. The provisions of the Act for the establishment of free-schools and the advancement of learning in this Province, passed A.D.

1801, are not attended to or improved by the inhabitants. Its conditions and promises are liberal ; and when peace is restored, it is to be hoped that the people will take measures for profiting by them\*.

Another want in these Townships, and that of a most serious nature, is their destitute state with regard to the supply of ministers of the Gospel. This defect, as well as the other disadvantages they labour under, which have been specified, are circumstances, which, in general, cannot be prevented in the first settlement of a country ; but they ought to be remedied as soon as possible. The British Government in church and state should take measures for providing for this branch of improvement without delay, as they value the prosperity of this part of His Majesty's dominions. The deficient and dangerous state in which the people are situated with regard to knowing and fulfilling their duties, the worship of God, the allegiance due to their country, and all the charities of social life, while they are left without the aid of any regular ministry of the Gospel, needs not to be represented. Were they long to continue in this state, they would degenerate into barbarism. But this change is not to be feared. It is not consistent with the uniform

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\* In Scotland, and in some parts of the United States, the people are obliged to support schools and schoolmasters. Except in a very newly settled country, this system ought to be generally adopted.

progress of human society. The evils which are to be dreaded, and of which there are some instances in this part of the country, are the spread of enthusiasm and fanaticism among the people, and their being led by false and ignorant teachers into many errors and irregularities in their lives and conversation\*. It is to be hoped that ministers of the Established Church will ere long be supplied by Government.

The reservations of land in all the granted Townships of one-seventh for the future disposition of the crown, and one-seventh for the support of a protestant clergy, is a noble institution; and this provision must hereafter afford a large fund for the purposes of improvement, which have been here recommended. At present, a small proportion only of these reservations is rented, and the revenue arising from them is inconsiderable; but this and their value will increase with the growing prosperity of the country; which circumstance is an additional reason for attending to its interests and welfare.

The existing war with the United States is of course, at present, a complete check to all measures of improvement; but it is to be hoped that it will soon be terminated, and that it will be succeeded by many beneficial effects

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\* This remark especially applies to a new sect which not long since prevailed to some extent in several of the Townships East of Lake Memphramagog.

conducive to the interest of these colonies. The attention of Great Britain to them has been called forth, and gloriously displayed in the munitions of war. No doubt, she will extend her maternal care to them, and assist and encourage them in prosecuting the pursuits of peace, and the improvements in their domestic economy, which ought not to be procrastinated, and which require her fostering hand. Her generosity and her interest, in assisting her colonies, are not at variance; and the useful and grateful returns which they will make of their riches and loyalty will strengthen and increase their mutual ties of affection and good-will, and their reciprocal benefit\*. These colonies will be a valuable and happy appendage to the empire of Great Britain, when they are duly cultivated and improved. The Eastern Townships will improve rapidly when the blessings of peace are restored, and when Government shall extend to them the assistance and improvements which have been here suggested. As soon as good roads, a court of judicature, and clergymen, and school-masters, are introduced into them, they will be as rich and fruitful a country as any part of His Majesty's dominions; and the inhabitants of them will be as happy and prosperous a people

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\* In the countries of Europe where the spirit of industry subsists in full vigour, every person settled in such colonies as are similar in their situation to those of Spain, is supposed to give employment to three or four at home, in supplying his wants.—ROBERTSON'S *Hist. of America*.

as any in the world. Then, an English, Scotch, or Irish labouring-man, husbandman, or agriculturist, seeking to settle himself, or to provide for his family, beyond seas, could not consult his interest and happiness better than by coming to these Eastern Townships.

**FINIS.**

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